

ALABAMAARTS

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STATE ARTS AWARDS 2003

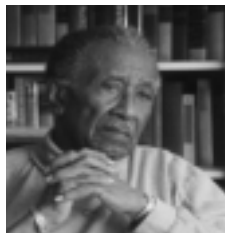
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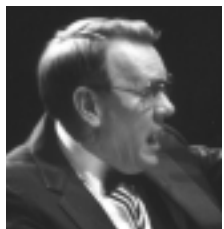
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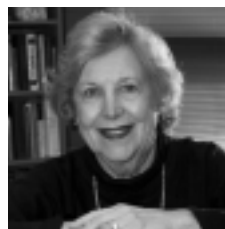
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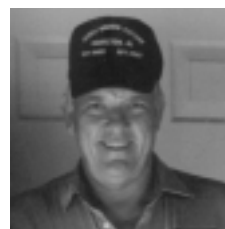
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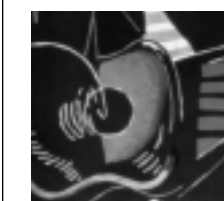
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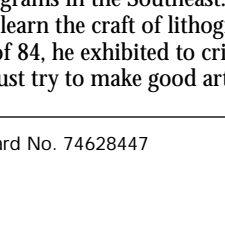
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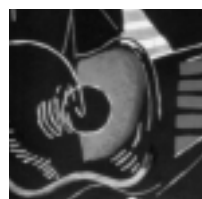
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On the Cover: linoleum cut with hand applied color by Richard Zoellner, "Jazz-Blues-02", 54" x 32". This piece was produced as part of the "Alabama Big Prints" project funded by ASCA and organized by Scott Stephens at the University of Montevallo to feature works by thirteen Alabama artists. This print was selected for the cover to celebrate the writings of Albert Murray, recipient of the 2003 Distinguished Artist Award.



ASCA also honors the artist Richard C. Zoellner who died March 6, 2003 at the age of 94. *The Tuscaloosa News* wrote, "Line and color, texture and symmetry, harmony and contrast, these were the tools of his trade, and he wielded them with such deftness that his work is included in the permanent collections of many of the nation's finest museums: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern art in New York, the Philadelphia Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, the Library of Congress, and many others."

Zoellner was a gifted teacher, establishing in 1945 at the University of Alabama one of only two fine art printmaking programs in the Southeast. His printmaking program attracted to the state a generation of young artists and professionals to learn the craft of lithography and etching. Following his retirement in 1979 he remained active as a painter and printmaker. In 1992, at the age of 84, he exhibited to critical acclaim 15 new works of art inspired by a trip to the Yucatan peninsula and the architecture of its Mayan ruins. "I just try to make good art," he often said.

Alabama's Council on the Arts

Mission Statement

The mission of the Alabama State Council on the Arts is to promote Alabama's diverse and rich artistic resources while highlighting excellence and educational experiences.

The Agency

The Alabama State Council on the Arts is the official state agency for the support and development of the arts in Alabama. It was established in 1966 by an act of the Alabama Legislature. The agency supports not-for-profit arts organizations, programming in the arts for the general public, and individual artists. The State Arts Council works to expand the state's cultural resources and preserve its unique cultural heritage and places a high priority on arts programming by and for schools. The Council's primary means of supporting the arts and making the arts more accessible to varied audiences is through a multi-faceted grants program which covers all disciplines and fields of creative expression.

The Council

The fifteen members of the Council are drawn from communities throughout the state. They are appointed by the Governor for six-year terms, and selection is based on expertise in the arts, business, or community affairs. The officers of the Council are elected by its members.

The Council meets four times each year, at various locations throughout the state. It approves agency programs and policies, develops long range plans, and makes final decisions on state and federal grant dollars under its jurisdiction.

A Celebration of the Arts

by Al Head

The arts are such an important part of the fabric of our state because of some very talented and committed people. The artist, arts educator, arts administrator, arts patron, arts volunteer as well as the audience and the purchaser of art are the ones who make it all happen. If one evaluates why some communities have such a vibrant arts environment and others may not, without exception, the answer lies in the commitment and talent of certain special people. This issue of Alabama Arts is devoted to those "certain people" who contribute to our state's cultural environment and work to improve the quality of life for so many citizens in communities across Alabama.

Every other year the Alabama State Council on the Arts recognizes individuals for their work in the arts through an awards program that is designed as a celebration of contribution and achievement. The winners of this year's awards represent the best qualities of contribution and achievement. They are individuals who have made a positive and lasting difference in their communities, the state and, in some cases, our nation. In 2003 the Council is honoring a nationally acclaimed writer, a life-long arts patron and volunteer, a fifth-generation traditional artist, an advanced-level arts educator, a music conductor/director, and a community arts activist and musician. The details of their accomplishments and contributions are profiled in the pages of this edition of Alabama Arts.

While six individuals are being honored this year, the Council realizes there are hundreds of people who deserved to be recognized for their work in the

arts in our state. We are hopeful the time for their recognition, in various forms, will come. But, the list is long of those no longer with us, who should always be remembered with appreciation and respect. Of recent note are Winton "Red" Blount, Sam Mockbee, Richard Zoellner, Martin Hames, Flemming Wilson, Bo McGee, Nell Carter, Freeman Wootten and the Council's own Bill Bates. There are many more heroes of the arts, which space here does not allow, that we should celebrate. From famous artists, to volunteers who work quietly behind the scenes, to educators who have touched the lives of thousands of young people, the list goes on of Alabamians who have made our state a better place to live.

The night of our 2003 awards program, May 2nd, will include honorees, performing and visual artists, special guests and many friends of the arts from all parts of the state. But, while awards and special programs are nice, we truly hope that you will support, appreciate and celebrate, year-round, the contributions of those in your community who make the arts such a vital part of our lives. ■

*Al Head is the
Executive Director
of the Alabama State
Council on the Arts.*



THE JONNIE DEE RILEY LITTLE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Philip A. Sellers

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

by Rick Harmon



Photo courtesy of William B. Sellers

Philip A. Sellers speaking at Huntingdon College

Philip Sellers appreciates art—paintings by the masters, well-performed symphonies, and classic Shakespeare plays. So it is a surprise that one of the things he most likes seeing at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts and at the Alabama Shakespeare festival is a line of buses. “You can go to the museum or the Shakespeare Festival during the day and you’ll see them, bus after bus,” said the Montgomery investment banker. “They must have gotten school buses full of children from almost every school in the state. It just makes you feel good to see it.”

For while Sellers enjoys fine art, he has spent much of his life ensuring that others have the opportunity to enjoy it, and his focus has usually been on the children, and their children to come. He takes a great deal of pride in the arts scene that Montgomery has created. “I think from the standpoint of quality of life, Montgomery has as good an arts scene or better than in any similar sized town I know,” said Sellers. Although he downplays his contribution, Sellers has had a great deal to do with the blossoming of Montgomery’s arts scene.

The former Montgomery Chamber of Commerce President has been a long-time member on the boards of The

Alabama Shakespeare Festival, The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, and The Montgomery Symphony. The Washington and Lee University graduate was named Montgomery’s Citizen of the Year in 1988. He took time to work with the arts despite



Photo courtesy of William B. Sellers

Philip A. Sellers with his wife, the late Caroline Sellers.



Photo courtesy of William B. Sellers

Philip A. Sellers with his extended family.

working with the Montgomery Area United Way, the YMCA, Jackson Hospital, Baptist Medical Center, the Montgomery Rotary Club, the Montgomery Area Council on Aging, the Davis Theatre for the Performing Arts and with Huntingdon College. "With all we have in Montgomery, it's almost hard not to get involved in the arts," he said chuckling.

When Sellers returned from World War II, where he served in the Army Air Corp in the Pacific, the city's arts scene was far humbler than it is today. "When I started working with the museum it was in an old school building," Sellers said.



Freda Perryman, Philip Sellers and Gordon Martin at a Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Board meeting, 2002.



Philip A. Sellers with "Oak Grove," a painting by Kelly Fitzpatrick.

"There was a collection of arrow-heads and some things like that, but nothing like what is there now." And while there were few fine arts in the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, back then the city's community theaters wouldn't have been confused with one of the top Shakespeare theaters in the world. "Of course, Red Blount was not only the man who did that, but was a major influence on the city's entire arts scene," Sellers said. "His interest in art and his financial support of it meant a lot, but by getting involved he also encouraged others to get involved in the arts." "I was made chairman when the Alabama Shakespeare Festival came to Montgomery. It was a wonderful

experience. I think I got much more out of it than I put into it."

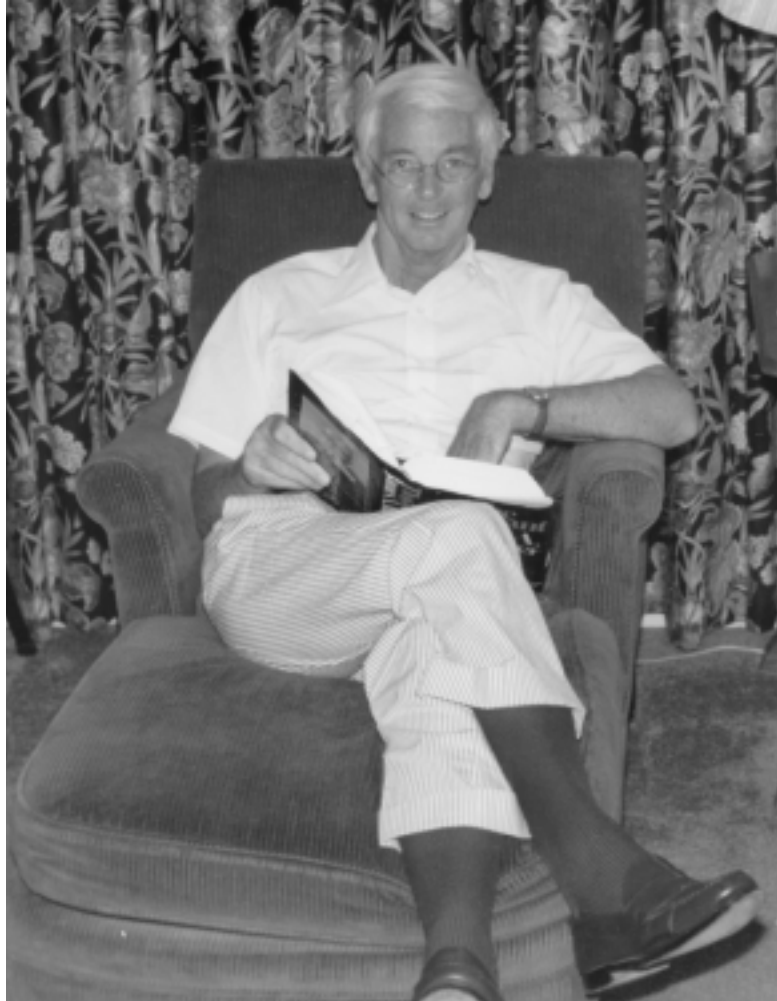
Kent Thompson became ASF Artistic Director several years after the festival moved to Montgomery, but he said he has heard enough to know that while Blount brought the theater here, it is hard to overestimate Seller's contributions. "Philip played a major role in the theater's successful move to Montgomery," Thompson said. "The Blounts were responsible for the initial vision and the funding, but Philip was really the board chairman in charge of carrying it out." Sellers not only made a major contribution in bringing the theater here, but also in bringing its current artistic director. "He had a huge impact on my decision to come

here," Thompson said. "He is straightforward and direct, but gentle and civilized. I know he had to deal with a number of situations and did so with aplomb."

While working with the museum and the symphony, even Sellers was not ambitious enough to dream that they would become what they are today. "I think we tried to envision what they might become, but I don't think we even came close," he said. "Red was probably the only one. He wanted not just the best Shakespeare festival in the state, but in the world." While he may not have initially envisioned it, Sellers never saw these lofty goals as being unreachable. He was appointed to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education in 1982, and that experience convinced him people can make a major difference if they try hard enough. "It made the impression that it didn't take too many people to turn the world around if they were intent enough on doing it," he said. It's an impression that became a reality as Montgomery's arts blossomed, although Sellers said it has happened so gradually that even he doesn't realize the immensity of the change. "You don't really notice how everything sprang up," he said. "It's been a gradual growth. It's like going to the symphony and hearing the improvement, and they seem to improve almost every performance, but you don't realize how much they have improved from the year before or several years before."

At 82, Sellers is still active. He is president of Philip A. Sellers Co. Inc., a Montgomery investment firm, and has no thoughts of retiring, although he is spending more time with his two daughters and two sons, and 12 grandchildren. While he said he is finally dropping off some of the committees he has long been on, he does it realizing the huge impact they've had on Montgomery. "The arts have meant a tremendous amount to this city," Sellers said. "It's meant a lot as far as recruiting industry, but it has also meant a lot as far as recruiting people. I don't have to tell you how many military families have been dragged here not wanting to come because of all they may have heard about the South and then returned here to make it their home because they liked it so much. "The arts has a lot to do with creating that kind of environment. I think the Alabama Shakespeare Festival and the Montgomery Museum are two of the best recruiting tools this city could ever have."

Still, Sellers hasn't done what he has with an eye on economic impact or recruitment. "I don't think we were smart enough to think of the arts in business terms, what it



Philip A. Sellers, relaxing at home, 1981.

Photo by Rex McDowell

might mean as far as attracting industry to the community," he said. "We looked at it more in terms of what it meant to children and to the generations who would come along after them." Sellers smiles, perhaps once again envisioning one of the city's artistic creations—the creation of lines of buses full of children who will witness wonders they never would have seen before. ■

Rick Harmon is the features Editor for the Montgomery Advertiser.

THE DISTINGUISHED ARTIST AWARD

Albert Murray

SCOOTER COMES HOME

by Jay Lamar

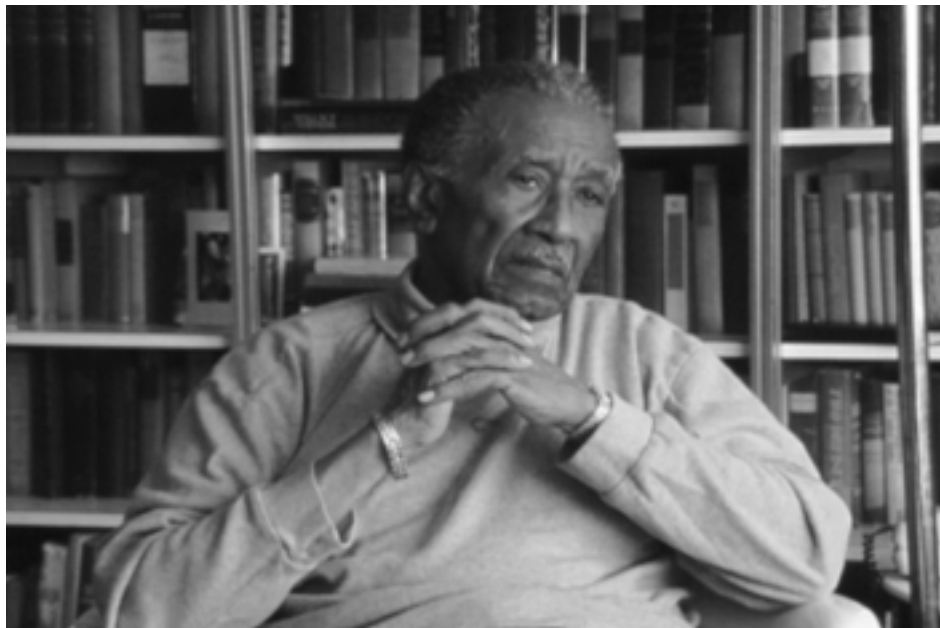
Cast the fortune of a Negro child born in the early part of the twentieth century in the tiny south Alabama town of

because my home is in the briar patch." Novelist, essayist, biographer, and critic Albert Murray has bounded again and again into the

phere of racism in America. He put it to us thus: one can be reduced to a statistic or one can participate in the larger scene. One can choose either to be diminished or to use all the tools of art and intellect to enlarge the scope, and therefore the potential, of the scene.

There can be no question about Murray's response to the circumstances. Although he did not begin his writing career in earnest until after his retirement from the U.S. Air Force in 1970, since the publication of *The Omni-Americans* Murray has continued through a dozen books—biographies, collections of critical essays, novels, and recently, a book of poetry—to offer startling, transformative, deeply intellectual, and highly creative insights into art, music, literature, and American culture.

In the 1930s, Murray attended Tuskegee Institute, where he later taught. His classmate and lifelong intellectual sparring partner was Ralph Ellison, author of *Invisible Man*. At Tuskegee, Murray read widely, a lifelong habit. "Reading's the liberating device because it makes the world yours," he has said. "How can you segregate a guy who's coming to terms with the whole world?" Hemingway, Thomas Mann, Auden, Freud, Faulkner, Proust,



Albert Murray in his library.

Nokomis. Not even the most audacious fortuneteller might have had the vision to see through the thick hedge of time and place. Race, culture, place, timing—everything should conspire to grow up a thorny barrier behind which the bright boy, like Sleeping Beauty, kept, numbed if not asleep.

But it turns out that prickly hedge exactly suits one who says, "My name is also Jack the Rabbit

place where less brilliant, more fearful folk fear to tread.

With the publication in 1970 of *The Omni-Americans*, Murray staked out a bramble-filled territory. In his first book, Murray asserted that race matters tremendously in America, but it is not a simple black-and-white, bi-tonal composition. In terms both more and less complex, Murray found both races partners, complicit, in creating the culture and atmos-

ALABAMIANS ON ALBERT MURRAY

Duke Ellington once called Albert Murray "the unsquarest person I know." Here's a sampling of what friends, colleagues, and admirers in Alabama have to say about him.

No one has more eloquently and thoroughly represented Alabama's influence on the art and culture of the United States than Albert Murray. The lush landscapes of Murray's Alabama have always fed his astonishingly imaginative creative capacity and provided a spyglass tree from which he formulates both his poetic vision and his insightful cultural critiques. As a journeyman who made his way from Mobile County Training School to Jazz at Lincoln Center, by way of Tuskegee Institute, he all the while conspired with the most critically acclaimed artists of the century, changing fakelore into a new folklore that conclusively illustrates that the blues idiom statement most completely reflects the elegant grace of the southern and black vernacular maneuvers at the core of what is truly American about our art. Whether writing stories that embalm the spirit of the deep South and Tuskegee in the 1930s, or poems that jam on Armstrong, Ellington, Faulkner, Freud, and Hemingway, or the most unique aesthetic observations of the twentieth century, he has always refined, extended, and elaborated on the riffs he learned in the southern briar patch of his youth.

Barbara Baker is an assistant professor of English at Tuskegee University and the author of The Blues Aesthetic and the Making of American Identity (2003). Her current project, sponsored by the National Endowment of the Humanities, is a book about Murray, Tuskegee, and the blues.

...

That most eminent of African-American scholars (and a good writer too), Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has already 'bout said it all. In his 1996 *New Yorker* "Profile" piece titled "King of Cats," he ends by saying, "this is Albert Murray's century; we just live in it."

Well, yeah.

I can't really presume to say more except to add that Albert Murray has, personally, uniquely, inspirationally, made me feel we are living in it together, him and me, him and me and everybody.

Everybody! All of us. Together.

I was not "another Alabama jackrabbit" (just like him) until he told me I was. I was not aware of my residence in "the briar patch" until he pointed out that common domicile for us all.

All of us! Everybody. Together.

My ear, eye, mind, and heart go back often to the opening and closing of his "Epilogue" to *South to a Very Old Place*:

"Yes the also and also of all that also; because the oldness that you are forever going back again by one means or another to is not only of a place and of people but also and perhaps most often of the promises that exact the haze-blue adventuresomeness from the brown-skinned hometown boy in us all."

Bert Hitchcock is Hargis Professor of American Literature at Auburn University.

...

Albert Murray's evocation of the world of boyhood in *The Spyglass Tree* ranks with the best of that genre. His *South to a Very Old Place* generated some of the best discussion I have ever encountered in the classroom. His fiction and essays illustrate his wide-ranging reading of some of the world's greatest thinkers whose books line his shelves. We are indebted to him for promoting the artistic value of jazz and the blues. Presenting this prestigious award to this intellectual giant brings as much honor to Alabama as it does to the recipient.

Dr. Jean McIver is professor of English at the University of South Alabama.

...

If Alabama can ever claim to have done right by its black folk, then Albert Murray may be its best hope. As an intellectual giant, he has held us all to the idea of making excellence our standard. As an American, he has called us to see the home-grown diasporic African as an all-American; as part of the core of what it means in this age to be an American. As an African American writer he is an epic hero, a beautiful brother with more style in a hangnail on his left pinky than a heap of people will ever know in a lifetime.

Congratulations Mr. Murray; Congratulations Alabama.

Dr. Amilcar Shabazz is Director of the African American Studies Program and Assistant Professor in the Department of American Studies at the University of Alabama.

AN ALBERT MURRAY BIBLIOGRAPHY

The essay, biography, the novel, even poetry—there is hardly a genre Murray has not employed. The following list suggests the prolific and various output of his literary life. Read them all, but also don't miss the chance to hear Murray in person. He is a brilliant talker. *Conversations with Albert Murray* (1997), edited by Roberta McGuire, includes 20 interviews with Murray and offers a taste of his inimitable style.

The Omni-Americans: New Perspectives on Black Experience and American Culture (1970)

South to a Very Old Place (1971)

The Hero and the Blues (1973)

Train Whistle Guitar (1974)

Stomping the Blues (1976)

Good Morning Blues: The Autobiography of Count Basie (as told to Albert Murray) (1985)

The Spyglass Tree (1991)

Seven League Boots (1995)

The Blue Devils of Nada: A Contemporary American Approach to Aesthetic Statement (1996)

Trading Twelves: The Selected Letters of Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray (2000)

From the Briarpatch File: On Context, Procedure, and American Identity (2001)

Conjugations and Reiterations (2001)



An early family portrait of the Murrays, Albert, daughter Michell, and wife Mozelle.

Photo courtesy of Alabama Center for Public Television

Malraux, Burke, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—his literary influences are global, classical. Literature is basic equipment for living, Murray notes, because “without a sense of form, without a sense of purpose, middle, and end, what we have is insanity.”

Throughout his career Murray has been serious about music. In fact, jazz and the blues are central to Murray's ideas about American society and culture, as well as his literary projects. Even before the 1985 *Autobiography of Count Basie* (as told to Albert Murray), Murray was struck by the richness, the aptness of blues and jazz. In *Stomping the Blues*, *The Hero and The Blues*, and *From the Briarpatch File: On Context, Procedure, and American Identity*, he explores the blues idiom. The artist, Murray says, uses “regional particulars,” the “idiomatic details, the down-home conventions, the provincial customs and folkways.” But over them all is the “the fully orchestrated blues statement,” a strategy, he suggests, “for acknowledging the fact

that life is a low-down dirty shame and for improvising or riffing on the exigencies of the predicament.”

Murray has always used his Alabama landscape for setting, image, and ideas. Alabama appears in the novels that draw extensively on Murray's own life—*South to a Very Old Place*, *Train Whistle Guitar*, *The Spyglass Tree*, and *Seven League Boots*. The boy Scooter, who is also Jack the Rabbit, the “thin gray, ghost-whispering mid-winter drizzle,” Stagolee and outlaw Railroad Bill, the sound of freight trains headed to Meridian, the music of language spoken by real people in a real place—these are his “regional particulars.”

Yet Murray the artist is ultimately about the universal. “My stories are really about what it means to be human,” he wrote in *Blue Devils of Nada*. Through his work, he peels back the layers of individual history, character, voice to reveal, in the form and intent of our own original music, an American mythology. Not a make-believe cartoon. But a mighty story of

human existence that finds a narrative, a code, and a hero in the blues.

As O'Connor Professor of Literature at Colgate University and through stints at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, Emory University in Atlanta, and the University of Missouri, Murray has exerted a powerful influence on a generation of writers, thinkers, and artists. Author and

critic Stanley Crouch once described him as "my mentor and far more my father than the fellow whose blood runs in my veins." And Henry Louis Gates wrote in the *New Yorker*, part of the answer to the question "what does it mean to be black" is "rejecting all exclusionary responses to the questions, as Albert Murray, the great contrarian of American cultural criticism, has inspired generations of thinkers to do."

In fact, Murray's importance is acknowledged almost everywhere: A *New Yorker* piece finds Murray "possessed of the poet's language, the novelist's sensibility, the essayist's clarity, the jazzman's imagination, the gospel singer's depth of feeling." *The Boston Globe* asserts that he is "as close to a classic man of letters as one might find in this country today." *The Washington Post Book World* describes Murray as "one of the

Photo courtesy of Alabama Center for Public Television



Albert Murray in Europe.

best-kept secrets in contemporary American literature. He is our premier writer about jazz and blues, an incisive critic, and a social commentator of wide-ranging vision." Whether mentoring Wynton Marsalis in the creation of *Jazz* at Lincoln Center, consulting with Ken

Burns on Jazz, being interviewed on National Public Radio, or passionately talking about books and ideas, Murray inspires love and admiration. As Alabama celebrates Murray's life work with the Distinguished Artist Award, it is appropriate to remember the artist's mythology: "Improvisation is the ultimate human (i.e. heroic) endowment." It is the "ability

to operate on dynamics equivalent to those of the vamp, the riff, and most certainly the break, which jazz musicians regard as the Moment of Truth, or that disjuncture that should bring out your personal best."

Circumstances create heroes. In their rugged individualism and accep-



Albert murray and Duke Ellington sharing a laugh.

Photo courtesy of Alabama Center for Public Television



Photo courtesy of Alabama Center for Public Television

Albert Murray with Ralph Ellison.

tance of adversity as an inescapable condition of human existence, they show “flexibility” or “the ability to swing.” They are self-reliant. They have charisma. Forged in a “frame of acceptance”—or the willingness to rise to the occasion—heroes produce their “personal best.”

Altogether not a bad description of Albert Murray stomping the blues away. ■

Jay Lamar is assistant director of the Auburn University Center for the Arts & Humanities.

Excerpt from *Train Whistle Guitar* by Albert Murray

There was a chinaberry tree in the front yard of that house in those days, and in early spring the showers outside that window always used to become pale green again. Then before long there would be chinaberry blossoms. Then it would be maytime and then junebugtime and no more school bell mornings until next September, and when you came out onto the front porch and it was fair there were chinaberry shadows all the way from the steps to the gate.

When you climbed up to the best place in the chinaberry tree and looked out across Gins Alley during that time of the year the kite pasture, through which you took the short cut to the post office, would be a meadow of dog fennels again. So there would also be jimson weeds as well as ragworts and rabbit tobacco along the curving roadside from the sweet gum corner to the pump shed, and poke salad from there to the AT&N....

Southeast of all that was the L&N clearing, across which you could see the trains and beyond which you could also see that part of the river. Next on the horizon due south was Three Mile Crest, which blocked off Dodge Mill Bottom and that part of Three Mile Creek. So you couldn't see the waterfront either, nor any part of the downtown Mobile, Alabama, skyline, not even with real binoculars.

Nor could you see One Mile Bridge beyond the tree-line to the southwest. Nor the pecan orchard which you knew was due west out over the gate and the sunflowers

and across the AT&N cut, which you couldn't see either. Nor African Baptist Hill. But between that neighborhood and the Chickasaw Highway was the Southern Railroad, whose night whistles you could sometimes hear as sometimes after midnight you could also hear the GM&O and the GM&N en route to St. Louis, Missouri, and Kansas City by way of Meridian, Mississippi.

All you could see due north up Dodge Mill Road beyond Buckshaw Corner and the crawfish pond that was once part of a Civil War artillery embankment was the sky above Bay Poplar Woods fading away into the marco polo blue horizon mist on the other side of which were such express train destinations as Birmingham, Alabama, and Nashville, Tennessee, and Cincinnati, Ohio, and Detroit Michigan, plus the snowbound Klondike of Canada plus the icebound tundras of Alaska plus the North Pole.

The Official name of that place (which is perhaps even more a location in time than an intersection on a map) was Gasoline Point, Alabama, because that was what our post office address was, and it was also the name on the L&N timetable and the road map. But once upon a time it was also the briar patch, which is why my nickname even then was Scooter, and is also why the chinaberry tree (that was ever as tall as any fairy tale beanstalk) was, among other things, my spyglass tree.

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Johnny Long

A SOUND OF THE SOUTH

by Andy Ellis

Photo courtesy of Troy State University Photography



Dr. Johnny Long directs the Troy State University Band.

A glance at Dr. John M. Long's resume reveals a myriad of accomplishments in the field of music and band directing. A member of the National Band Association's Hall of Fame and the Alabama Bandmasters Hall of Fame...recipient of the Alabama Outstanding Music Educator award...Sudler Medal of Honor presented by the John Philip Sousa Foundation...Buildings that bear his name. And, the list goes on and on.

What is not immediately evident is the influence the longtime high school and college educator and director has had on the lives of young people through the years. Literally hundreds of Long's former students have gone on to careers as band directors or music instructors,

and many, like University of North Alabama Chair of Music, Dr. Jimmy Spencer, give the credit for his career choice to the man who was his band director at Montgomery's Robert E. Lee High School.

"He is the reason I am in music," Simpson once said about Long. "He has the ability to make you want to be the best you can be in

any situation. He had a profound influence on my life."

One familiar theme among many of Long's former students is his leadership both in and out of the band room. "He was much more than just a teacher," one former student once said of Long. "He taught some music along with some good values, and those values are still with me to this day."

Still another recalled Long's lessons for life. "The thing about him is that it's not only the leadership he gives you as a student, but it's the leadership he provides forever afterwards."

Long's love for music began early in life and, at least in part, can be attributed to his family. Born in Guntersville, Alabama, he began at

age six taking piano lessons from his mother. A graduate of Athens College, she also studied at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and put her musical abilities to work to bring in money after the Great Depression wiped out the family lumber business.

As Long grew, so did his musical talents. Entering Marshall County High School, he joined the band, playing the trumpet under the direction of Mrs. Maxine Couch and



Johnny Long and his wife Mary Lynn say goodbye to Dekalb County High School in Fort Payne during a farewell party as the couple prepared to move to Montgomery. Long would become the first band director at the newly opened Robert E. Lee High School.

Photo courtesy of Troy State University Photography

later under the watchful eye of James L. Cowart.

Taking notice of Long's abilities, Cowart asked him to join his dance band known as "Cowart's Clowns." It was the first of many such invitations Long would receive.

In 1943, as Long entered his senior year, he found himself in a unique position. Cowart was drafted and entered the Navy, leaving the school without a band director. Long was asked by the school's principal to serve in the position until another candidate could be found. However, no one was found to fill the position, and Long was left to lead the band throughout his senior year.

In December of that year, Long turned 18 and was eligible for the draft. However, due to his position as band director, he was allowed to remain in school and graduate. After graduation, Long joined the Army. His musical talents were recognized in the Army as well, earning him an assignment to the touring



Long gives his customary salute before TSU's "Sound of the South" band takes the field for a halftime performance.

Photo courtesy of Troy State University Photography

He enrolled in Jacksonville State and for the second time in his young life became both a student and a band director. During this time, Long also worked as band director at Jacksonville High School.

After receiving his bachelor's degree from Jacksonville State in 1949, Long moved to Oneonta, Alabama and became band director at Blount County High School. Although he stayed at the school only one year, it was there that his innovative nature began to blossom. He decided the band should have a flag line, something that was rare in southern marching bands. The flag line proved to be a very popular addition to the band, and it also allowed the young band leader to meet Mary Lynn Adams. The two were married the following July.

band the "Southernaires."

At the end of World War II, Long was discharged from the service and enrolled in the University of Alabama to study Pre-Law. His stay in Tuscaloosa was short lived. After only one quarter, his love of music called him away to Jacksonville State College to become the assistant band director.



Student band leader Cobb Alexander (left) and Long (center) accepting a check for the 1963 Robert E. Lee High School Band's trip to a national competition in Cleveland, Ohio.

Photo courtesy of Troy State University Photography

From Oneonta, Long moved on to Fort Payne and DeKalb County High School where he stayed from 1951-1955. His influence really began to grow during this time. Other band directors both at the high school and college levels begin to take notice of the interesting marching styles and unique halftime shows being produced by this brilliant young band leader. These styles began to be mimicked by others throughout the southeast.

In 1955, Long accepted the challenging position of building a band program at the newly-opened Robert E. Lee High School. It was while at the Montgomery high school that Long began to gain a reputation on the national level. Under his direction, the Lee Band won five national band contests. The Lee Concert Band also was the only Alabama band at that time to be selected for the Sousa Foundation's Historic Roll of Honor of High School Concert Bands from 1920-1960.

While Long had his hands full building the Lee program into one of national prominence, he also was completing work on a master's degree in music from the University of Alabama. He also was sharing his love of music with the Montgomery community.

Long organized the Montgomery Youth Orchestra in 1955, and served as the group's conductor for much of his 10-year stay in Alabama's capitol city. He also



Long (center) is presented with the National Kappa Psi Distinguished Service to Music Award in 1982.

Photo courtesy of Troy State University Photography

became involved with the Blue-Gray Football Classic as music director, a position he would hold for 41 years.

Long's community service and dedication did not go unnoticed in the Montgomery area. In 1959, he was nominated by the Montgomery Jaycees as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Men in America, and in 1964, he was presented the Distinguished Service Award by the city of Montgomery.

In 1965, Long left the high school ranks to become the band director at Troy State University, where he began immediately to build

a program of national reputation.

Continuing to pass along his knowledge and love of music to young people, Long established a high school summer band camp in 1965 that ran throughout most of his tenure at the university. Later, in 1973, Dr. Long established the Southeastern United State Concert Band Clinic, which has grown and continues to thrive. This year, the clinic drew more than 1,500 band students, directors and parents to the Troy State campus in February.

Under Long, the Troy State University's "Sound of the South"



Photo courtesy of Troy State University Photography

Former TSU Chancellor, the late Ralph Adams (left), speaks with Long during a reception honoring the longtime band director.

Marching Band represented the state of Alabama in four presidential inaugural parades—two for President Richard Nixon, one for President Ronald Reagan and one for President George Bush. The TSU band also was the official band for President Nixon during his 1971 visit to Mobile and for President Reagan during his 1987 visit to Dothan.

Long became chair of the Troy State music department in 1972, a position he held until 1996, and was dean of the School of Arts and Sciences from 1974 to 1991. He also served as assistant to the president from 1982-1996, and dean of the School of Fine Arts from 1992-1996.

As with the other communities in which he served, Long adopted the city of Troy and became a vital influence. He served from 1973-1977 on the Board of Education of the Troy City School System, including one year as the group's president. He also served a one-year term as the

president of the Troy Chamber of Commerce.

Long's national reputation continued to grow after coming to Troy State University. In 1969, Long was selected by the *School Musician Magazine* as one of the Ten Outstanding Band Directors in the United States and Canada. Three years later, he received the Citation of Excellence by the National Band Association, and in 1977, became the first active bandmaster elected to the Alabama Bandmasters' Hall of Fame.

In 1973, he was elected to membership in the prestigious American Bandmasters Association (ABA), and later led the organization as its president in 1987. It was during his tenure as president that the ABA successfully lobbied Congress to pass a resolution making John Philip Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" the official march of the United States of American.

Long's highest honor came in 1994 when he was elected to the National Band Association's Hall of Fame of Distinguished Band Conductors, making him the youngest active bandmaster to be so honored.

Long retired as the Troy State marching band director following the 1995 football season and ended his duties as dean of the school of fine arts and director of the concert and symphony bands in 1996. Still very active in retirement, he maintains an office on the Troy campus. His influence on Troy State University is evident in the two buildings on campus that bear his name – John Maloy Long Hall, which houses the university's Music Department and the Hawkins-Adams-Long Hall of Honor, which is home to the National Band Association's Hall of Fame, the TSU Museum and the library of former Troy Chancellor Ralph Adams.

Upon his retirement, Long downplayed the numerous accolades and said he had only one hope. "People often ask me how I would like to be remembered," he said. "I would like to be remembered as a teacher and a band director who made a difference."

Indeed, Dr. John M. Long has and continues to make a difference in so many ways. ■

Andy Ellis is coordinator of University Relations at Troy State University.

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Amanda W. Penick

HALF A CENTURY OF MUSIC MAKING

by Dr. Pamela W. Penick

Motivation. Inspiration.
Partnership.
Responsibility.
Accomplishment. These are the concepts that describe a half-century of instruction by master teacher and pianist Amanda Penick. The University of Alabama music professor will receive a Governor's Art Award in May, and she holds the distinction of being the longest tenured professor in higher education in the State of Alabama. Penick has taught at the Capstone since 1953, and she represents the pinnacle of piano teaching in our state.

In a recent conversation with Amanda Penick, her love of music and teaching is apparent immediately. "As a teacher, when one has good students who provide stimulus and motivation for the teacher, the teacher reciprocates, and in turn provides stimulus and motivation for the student. It is dual motivation, and it is a marriage of sorts. We all have the love of music, and with that we are recreating and re-defining the craft of music, and that in itself has been my reason to continue to teach." Penick thinks of teaching as an ever-enlarging circle, believing practice leads to accomplishment, accomplishment leads to motivation, and that subsequent motivation produces more practice. "But always, the



Amanda W. Penick in her studio with her piano.

Photo by Rickey Yanaura

music itself is of the utmost importance as we strive to be better as teachers and musicians."

It is insightful teaching philosophies such as these that have made Amanda Penick a successful and prolific teacher and musician. Her accolades are many. A native of

artist, clinician, adjudicator and conductor of master classes for numerous local, district, state and national levels of the Music Teachers National Association. Penick is past president of Pi Kappa Lambda, the Alabama Music Teachers Association, and has been a member of the Southern

Division Executive Board of MTNA. She is an honorary member of XXXI Club, Omicron Delta Kappa and the Golden Key Honor Society. Her students have won many awards and competitions including the MTNA Collegiate Artist Competition and the Young Keyboard Artist Competition. Amanda Penick holds the Master Teacher Certification from MTNA, and in 1988 was the recipient of the University of Alabama's Outstanding Commitment to Teaching Award.

In 1998, a \$20,000 endowment fund in Penick's name was established by the

Music Teachers National Association. This endowment is one of only four perpetuated by the Board of Trustees of the Music Teachers National Association. Recently she also received the Druid Arts Musician of the Year Award from the Arts Council of Tuscaloosa. As a performer, she has given recitals and master classes throughout the Southeast, has appeared extensively

as soloist and chamber musician, and has performed with the Alabama Symphony Orchestra and the Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra.

In recognition of her teaching excellence and in service to the Alabama Music Teachers Association, the community and the state, Penick was awarded the inaugural AMTA Teacher of the Year in 1998. When she received this award, she unselfishly remarked that "This honor really should go to those teachers who have gone before us and have shared their ideas, and to those who have made us the best we can be." She truly feels that the inspiration and the fine teaching she received from former teachers and fellow musicians have helped bring her to where she is today. She remarks that her studies with Roy McAllister were very inspiring to her as a young student, and he passed down a series of principals that have served as a guide in her own teaching.

Amanda Penick's teaching approach has evolved from many experiences. She states that many of the pedagogical concepts she uses with her students have evolved from her own teaching experiences over the years. Her many travels have no doubt given her teaching added historical perspective and her colorful use of imagery and ethnic flavor has enhanced her stylistic approach to pieces.

From personal experience, the three years that I worked as a doctor-



Amanda W. Penick at her piano during the 1950s.

Alabama and a lifelong resident of Tuscaloosa, Amanda received her Bachelor of Music from Hollins College in Roanoke, Virginia in 1952 and her Master of Music degree from the University of Alabama in 1953. Following her master's degree work with Roy McAllister at the University, she subsequently studied with Irwin Freundlich and Joseph Prostackoff. She has served as guest



Photo by Rickey Yanaura

Amanda W. Penick in her studio with graduate student Melodie King.

al student under Amanda's instruction will always be the most productive and satisfying years of piano study for me. Through years of teaching experience, she instinctively chooses literature that is the perfect match for the student. Her psychological approach with each student is extremely intuitive, and she is able to instill in each student the confidence factor that is so important in performing. Penick makes each student the best that the student can possibly be. This is the hallmark of superior teaching.

Alabamians around the state continue to enjoy her weekly show on Alabama Public Television. For 25 years, "The Pianist at Work" has showcased Penick's outstanding students, as well as many of her "grand students" from all corners of the

State of Alabama. In the format of a master class, the young pianist not only performs but also is given pedagogical suggestions regarding the performance. Often Amanda shares a delightful historical or a personal anecdote about the composer or composition. Anyone watching the show, whether amateur or professional, should be able to go away with ideas that could be applied to daily piano teaching or performing, and many times, just life in general.

How has her teaching changed over the years? Amanda Penick says she has totally changed her approach since she began teaching fifty years ago. "At first I was learning how to teach, and I was learning the music that I was teaching." Now as a mature and seasoned professor, the emphasis has shifted to

continually exploring different methods by which to communicate a particular concept to the student(s). The overall enjoyment of the music is the ultimate priority, but she places much emphasis on sound and memorization. When Penick studied with Freundlich in New York, she told Freundlich that she "wanted a Madison Avenue Sound." The development of a beautiful sound is one of her major priorities in teaching, along with emphasizing to students the ability to really listen to the sound(s) that they are producing.

Amanda Penick is also known for her quick wit and wonderful sense of humor. Long-time friend, colleague and duo piano partner Gloria Moody recalls with fondness the fun and great times that she

and Amanda have shared over the years. Coincidentally, the daughters of Amanda and Gloria were expecting their first children at approximately the same time. In celebration of the birth of the first grandchildren for both of them, Amanda and Gloria worked on and performed the "Mother Goose Suite" by Ravel on Amanda's weekly program, "The Pianist at Work." Amanda very dryly commented to Gloria, "When one is young, one plays what one is required to play; when one is older and more mature, one plays what one wants to play, and when one is much older, one plays what one is able to play!" Of course, both ladies have always performed wonderfully, and they still collaborate occasionally.

Penick also experiences the conflict of time between performing and teaching. "Each craft involves many hours. When I pour my energy and my heart into teaching, it is always difficult to pull away and dedicate myself to performing." Penick seems to have accomplished that task very well, as she has continued to perform and give much sought-after master classes throughout the state and region.

The encouragement and inspiration that Amanda Penick gives to her students are evident. She has graduated more UA School of Music doctoral candidates than any other professor. Penick feels that the students are her responsibility as long as they are under her tutelage, and she

Photo courtesy of University of Alabama Public Relations



Amanda W. Penick early in her career.

is very supportive of their endeavors and sincerely wants to help them do well throughout their careers. For Penick "it is a joint collaboration in a great musical venture". When asked if there is one thing she would say to excite and to encourage young music students, while remaining realistic, she replied, "Music is not the most lucrative profession, and it is definitely not a sedentary job, but it is very rewarding to those who love it as much as I."

Amanda Penick has dedicated her life to bringing music to the State of Alabama and undoubtedly has produced more former students who have become outstanding piano teachers around the state than anyone else. Her commitment to teaching is most outstanding and is evi-

dent from her long list of award winners as well as masters and doctoral graduates from the University of Alabama. Penick's superior legacy has raised the bar for piano teaching and performing for the entire state. Her musicianship is superb and she transfers that love of music to each and every student. Kudos to Amanda Penick, recipient of a Governor's Arts Award, a distinction which she so readily deserves. Her service to the State of Alabama for half a century of musical dedication is truly outstanding and remarkable. ■

Dr. Pamela W. Penick is a former doctoral student of Amanda W. Penick. Pamela is also Amanda's daughter-in-law, and is currently the Executive Director of the Arts and Humanities Council of Tuscaloosa.

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Cecil Whitmire

THE "MIGHTY WURLITZER"

by Alec Harvey

The story has been around for decades now, but it has never been more true.

Once upon a time, in a newsroom in Birmingham, someone once said she only knew two people who had their magic kingdoms: Walt Disney and Cecil Whitmire.

Disney, of course, has spread his far and wide, from California to Florida to Europe and Asia.

Whitmire, on the other hand, has confined his to a block in downtown Birmingham. Whitmire's magic kingdom—on Third Avenue North between 18th and 19th Streets—consists of The Alabama Theatre and the Lyric Theatre across the street, a vaudeville house that will soon be restored to its former glory, if Whitmire has his way.

It all began, though, with the Alabama Theatre, which opened on Dec. 26, 1927 at noon with a showing of "Spotlight," starring Esther Ralston. The grand movie palace—which played host to stage shows and orchestras in its early years—would become known as "The Showplace of the South," presenting some of the most popular movies over the years, including "Gone With the Wind."

During the 1940s and 1950s, a young boy from Knoxville, Tennessee, would go to the theatre

when he came to visit his father's family in Birmingham.

"The Alabama would babysit me," Whitmire says. "I would go down aisle three, seventh row from the front on the right hand side of the aisle and watch Stanleigh Malotte play the organ. It was thrilling. I can still remember sitting there hearing the organ motor go on and knowing it was about to play. Even at age seven, my palms would get sweaty because I knew I was about to hear something that would absolutely thrill me to death."

That love for the organ guided Whitmire's early years. He took lessons beginning at age 12 and continued playing while at the University of Tennessee and afterward, even while working fulltime for a wholesale hardware house.

"In those days, you could rent an organist for \$15 for two hours, and I was playing at funeral homes, country clubs, churches and other places just to make some extra money," Whitmire recalls.

At one of those gigs, he was asked to play at the Tennessee



Cecil Whitmire

Photo by Skyy Cam

Theatre. "I went for one day and stayed for 22 years," Whitmire says.

When he transferred to Birmingham in 1975, Whitmire was devastated to find the Alabama already had a house organist, but a year later, he got the job playing the movie palace's "Mighty Wurlitzer," a Publix 1 Crawford Special.

"The ride from the bottom of the pit to the top of the pit into the spotlight with a big crowd is just



Photo courtesy of the Alabama Theatre

Former Miss Americas with Cecil Whitmire outside of the Alabama Theatre. From left to right: Neva Jane Langley, Evelyn Ay, BeBe Shopp, Marian McKnight, Lee Meriwether and Jean Bartell.

terribly exciting," he says. "I don't have to spend my money on cocaine and heroin. I get my high just doing that."

While the Alabama changed hands several times during the 1970s and 1980s, one thing remained constant—Whitmire at the keyboard, playing "Big Bertha," the Mighty Wurlitzer, and delighting audiences.

"I was the only one who knew where all the light switches were and what keys fit what doors," Whitmire says. "They would put new management in, but I stayed. I stayed at the Alabama from 1976 through all the rough-and-tumble years when the public was abandoning the downtown and, of course, the theatre.

Eventually, the audiences just weren't there anymore.

The Alabama closed in the Spring of 1981, but Whitmire and the Birmingham Chapter of the American Theatre Organ

Society were determined to maintain the organ.

"It's such a fragile instrument, that if we didn't work on it, it would be junk and would cost hundreds of thousands dollars to get it back," Whitmire says.

To raise money for the organ's upkeep, Whitmire would perform two concerts a year, even though the "Showplace of the South" wouldn't fully open to the public again until 1988.

Returning to Knoxville for 14 months in 1981 and 1982, Whitmire and his wife, Linda, became involved in the restoration of The Tennessee Theatre and Atlanta's "Save the Fox" campaign.

"During that time, I always thought, if I had my theatre, here's what I would do," he says.

He'd soon get his chance. When the group that owned the Alabama went bankrupt in 1986,

Whitmire and the American Theatre Organ Society knew they'd have to buy the building to save the beautiful organ inside.

It wasn't easy.

"We just couldn't seem to muster any steam," Whitmire says. "Banks didn't want to do business with a bunch of organ people because they didn't think we knew what we were doing."

Eventually, they approached the bankruptcy court and were given 60 days to raise the \$106,000 in back taxes, insurance and interest needed to take control of the Alabama.

A fund-drive netted \$156,000, and Birmingham Landmarks, Inc.—which Whitmire has headed ever since—bought the Alabama on May 6, 1987.

"I'll never forget the feeling after I had signed those papers all day," Whitmire once recalled, his voice breaking ever so slightly. "I

came into the theatre through the back door, walked across the stage and looked out. It just hit me that we now had the responsibility for the place. I was overcome at that point to realize that a lifelong dream had come true."

Slowly but surely, Whitmire and about 60 volunteers began building the Alabama into a performing arts center, much to the surprise of many observers.

"When we took this theatre over, I don't know of anybody who really offered us any hope," Whitmire says. "They said it couldn't be done. The only thing we knew was that we had the desire to make something out of this old place. We have a saying around here that if you tell somebody it can't be done, it *will* be done."

Eventually, groups such as the Birmingham Music Club, the Birmingham Broadway Series and the Alabama Ballet began booking shows at the Alabama, and the theatre became another venue for pop, rock and blues concerts coming to town.

By 1992, the theatre was so busy that Whitmire quit his hardware job and turned his attention to his dream full time. When he began searching for a general manager for the Alabama, he knew just the man for the job.

"It came to me that this was the job I was



Fannie Flagg with Cecil.

Photo courtesy of the Alabama Theatre



James Earl Jones (center) with Cecil Whitmire and a theatre patron.

Photo courtesy of the Alabama Theatre

looking for for all my life," Whitmire says. "I had to take a terrible cut in salary, but how many people get the chance to do exactly what they love to do?"

After retiring from the hardware business, Whitmire quickly expanded his Alabama Theatre dream to include the Lyric Theatre, an old vaudeville house across the street from the Alabama Theatre. The Lyric opened in 1914, during vaudeville's heyday, serving as a live theatre, a movie theatre and, eventually, an adult movie theatre until it closed in 1993.

Since then, Whitmire and his group have been trying to raise the

money to renovate it, just as they did with the Alabama a decade ago.

"This house is just like the Majestic in New York," Whitmire told *The Birmingham News*. "It was built like a Broadway Theatre. When Milton Berle saw it in 1928, he said that he felt like he was in New York."

For Whitmire, his work at the Alabama Theatre is much more than just a job. It has been a part of his life for nearly six decades, much of that spent with his wife, Linda, who died in 2001.

The Alabama keeps a busy schedule, and more often than not,

whether it's Willie Nelson, the Spin Doctors, a touring theatre production or some high-school music program to be performed inside, Whitmire is there, proudly welcoming people into the house that he literally rebuilt.

He's chronicled the trek in last year's "The Alabama Theatre: Showplace of the South," a book written with Jeannie Hanks and chock full of photos and memories of the theatre, the organ and its patrons. The book recalls visits from luminaries such as Helen Reddy, Wayne Newton, Lionel Hampton and Lee Meriwether, as well as historical moments from the distant past (a 1934 fire that nearly took the Alabama with it) and the not-so-distant past (Garrison Keillor broadcasting live from the theatre in March 1993 despite a blizzard that paralyzed the city). One seems certain that a decade from now, Whitmire will be doing the same with the Lyric Theatre. ■

Alec Harvey is the Features Editor for The Birmingham News.



Photo courtesy of the Alabama Theatre

Cecil Whitmire at the Alabama Theatre's "Mighty Wurlitzer."

THE ALABAMA FOLK HERITAGE AWARD

Jerry Brown

ROOTS DEEP IN SOUTHERN CLAY

by Joey Brackner



there and play with it and (then) they say, 'it's not as simple as it looks.'" *Jerry Brown, 1985.*

Hamilton potter Jerry Brown is the recipient of the Alabama Folk Heritage Award for 2003. In choosing Brown from a strong field of nominees, a panel of southern folk art scholars cited Jerry's significance as one of a few remaining Alabama folk potters and his service to the people of Alabama as a representative of the state's folk art traditions. They also noted his efforts in training family members and others in traditional pottery making.

Jerry Dolyn Brown was born in 1942 in Pine Springs Alabama. His parents, Horace Vincent Brown (1889-1965) and Hettie Mae Stewart Brown (1911-1996), were both products of multi-generational pottery making families. The Browns, one of the South's most famous pottery-making families, are usually associated with Georgia, but in fact, members of the family have also made pottery in Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi. It is believed that Browns were potters in the late eighteenth century and possibly earlier. The Stewarts established a pottery in Louisville, Mississippi after moving there from Alabama shortly after the Civil War.

In the late 1930s, a recently divorced Horace Vincent "Jug" Brown, a Georgia-born potter, came to Louisville, Mississippi to work for Tom Stewart making pottery. He married Tom's sister Hettie Mae in 1939 and they soon moved to Pine Springs near Sulligent, Alabama to take over the operation of the E. P. Kennedy pottery. It was here that Jerry Brown was born in 1942. Jerry, his mother, older brother Jack, and baby sister Wanda Lou all helped at the pottery. Jerry and Jack learned to

"**E**verything about the pottery business has art to it. There's art to making it, art to finding the right kind of clay, art...to getting it mixed up to the right temperance, getting all the lumps ground out of it, and there's art to stacking it. There's art to firing it...without breaking a lot of it.... The pottery business is one of the oldest trades in the world...people come to my shop and say 'I believe I could do that.' And I tell them 'There's another wheel over there...and they get in



Jerry Brown with his wife Sandra.

Photo by Joey Brackner

Photo by Eileen Knott

make pottery at a very young age. Occasionally their relatives Otto, Jimmy and Walter Brown and Hettie's brother Gerald Stewart would work with them.

Working in the pottery shop was hard work, but an aging Jug Brown and his two young boys managed. Because he was an older than average father (born in 1889), Jug's boys were trained in a nineteenth-century style of pottery making. Like all pottery apprentices, Jerry and Jack made balls of clay for their father to turn. Jerry recalled that their father offered incentive for them to wedge and roll good balls: "My daddy (would) let me by with two or three (poorly made balls of clay)...you know those soft slips (soft clay) on the wheel? He just picked them up, a whole hand full and just throw them at me.... He'd daub me with them slips upside the head..."



Small churns by Jerry Brown.

Photo by Joey Brackner

Every aspect of their pottery business was traditional. For example, pottery was priced at so many cents per gallon. Jug Brown made utilitarian folk pottery using Albany Slip, white Bristol-type glaze and the traditional southern ash glaze.

Jerry remembered that his father made some face jugs but very few, "there just wasn't much demand for them" in the 1940s and 1950s. He recalled that the family never threw

away broken dishes, in order to use this material to make teeth for face jugs. This face jug tradition was the contribution of the Brown family, because, according to Hettie Mae Brown, the Stewarts did not make face jugs.

Tragedy struck the Brown family in 1964 when Jack was killed in an automobile accident. A year later Jug Brown died and Jerry, Wanda and their mother decided that they could not stay in the pottery business. Eventually, Jerry became a logger like many young men in northwest Alabama. He eventually married and moved to Hamilton. After the birth of a son, Jeff, Jerry and his first wife divorced. While Jerry was successful as a logger, he yearned to return to the pottery business. In 1979, he met and married Sandra Wilburn.

In 1982, Jerry Brown began making preparations to reenter the pottery business after an almost twenty year career as a logger. "(I had been) logging for a living and we had about two bad winters, one right after the other, stayed round here with



Jerry's mule drawn mud mill.

Photo by Joey Brackner

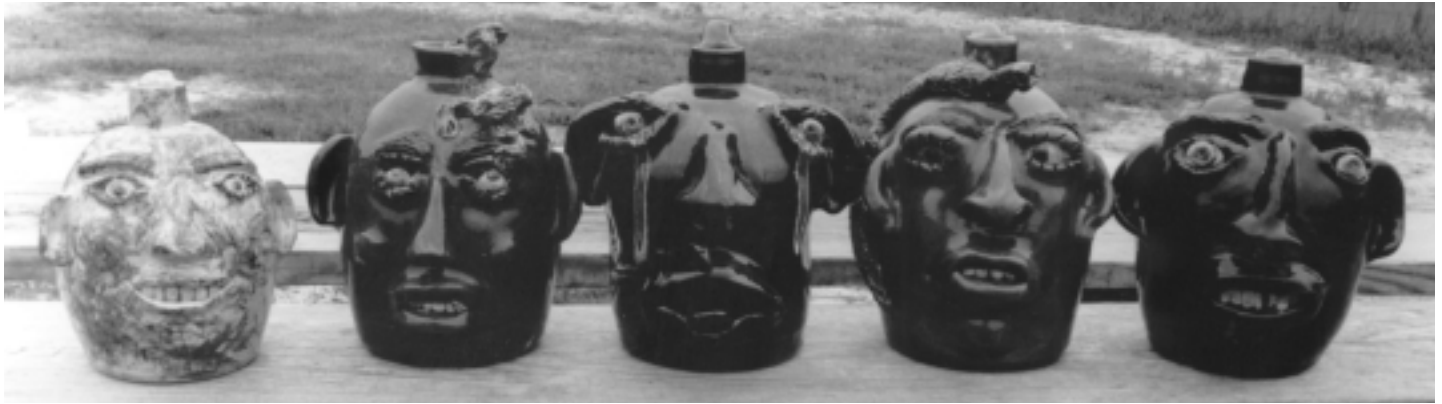


Photo by Joey Brackner

Jerry Brown's famous face jugs.

nothing to do. I told my wife I'm fixing to clean out my barn over here and put me in a pottery shop.... A lot of my friends come and say, 'man, you're crazy tearing down a nice a barn...to make a pottery shop out of'...once I started tearing everything down and redoing it, it was probably about two months, I had my wheel in there and I was making churns. Put up my (pug) mill out there where I was mixing my clay with the mule.... I'd been out it about twenty years and it probably took me about three or four months to really get the feel of it back right. Uncle Gerald, he come up and helped me out a lot.... I forgot about a lot of the fundamentals...but still a lot of things I still remembered.... I still remembered how much it'd take to make any size churn or flower pot or pitcher or whatever, I still remembered all that, I'd been down to my uncle's shop and made maybe a couple of jugs.... In about six months I could make a churn as big as I wanted to make and been out of it twenty years." Sandra recalled, "He decided to get into it, it seems just like overnight. He just comes in one evening, he said I'm fixing to go into pottery business, he hadn't mentioned it to me...next day he started out over here fixing his shop.... I guess all along he had it in the back of his mind, though."

During the mid-twentieth century, the few remaining Southern folk potters discovered an urban market interested in their pottery as art reflecting a folk heritage. In Alabama, this interest intensified in the 1970s and really took off during the 1980s after the production of several exhibitions about Alabama folk pottery. In 1985-1986, the Alabama State Council on the Arts and Appalshop shot and produced the film *Unbroken Tradition*. This documentary, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, documented pottery making at Jerry Brown's shop. This, along with the new public consciousness of traditional Southern pottery, encouraged Jerry's resolve to re-enter the pottery business.

While encouraged by the interest in old-time pottery, Jerry Brown realized the modern market was unlike that of his father. At first, he made old-fashioned utilitarian forms such as flue thimbles, and he did not mark his pottery. About a year into his rebirth as a potter, he started signing vessels on the bottom. He first sold pottery by the gallon, a traditional pricing mechanism, but quickly learned to price by form, with face jugs selling for the most. He also began experimenting with glaze combinations and unusual forms in response or in anticipation of market

desires, like other Southern folk potters he met at workshops and folk festivals. In 1984, Jerry and his Uncle Gerald Stewart participated in the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife. Then, in 1992, Jerry won the prestigious National Heritage Award from the National Endowment for the Arts. Those experiences have exposed the Browns to many other traditional potters and their repertoires. Consequently, the Brown Pottery showroom contains more canister sets, soup bowls, coffee mugs, chickens and face jugs. The pottery chickens were an idea that Jerry and Sandra got from meet-

ing the Meaders family of Georgia. Jerry has also demonstrated at many shows of his historic pottery.

He realized that ash-glazed pottery was older and that other Southern potters were still making and selling it. Since he could not remember his father's ash glaze formula, he asked his Uncle Gerald to help him devise a formula for it and he



Horace Vincent "Jug" Brown late in life.

Photo courtesy of Jerry Brown



Jerry Brown and Jeff Wilburn firing the kiln.

began using it on many vessels, especially his face jugs. Jerry and Sandra also received glazing advice from their many studio potter friends. A red glaze soon entered their repertoire. Perhaps the area of greatest experimentation came with the use of cobalt. At first, the Browns used cobalt to make a simple ring decoration around their churns. Later, they mixed cobalt with a Bristol slip to make a solid blue glaze. After that, they tried applying the cobalt randomly in a "splatter" glaze or by "feathering" it with a chicken feather.

In 1998, Browns Pottery launched a web site by virtue of its membership in the Alabama Mountain Lakes tourist organization. The web site gave the Browns another dimension of market exposure.

Despite this modernization of Browns Pottery, if a nineteenth-century potter could spend a week with Jerry Brown, he would feel right at home. Jerry Brown still digs his own clay at a clay pit in Detroit, Alabama started by the pottery-making Rye family over one hundred years ago. He continues to mill or "grind" the

clay with an old-fashioned mule-powered pug mill. He does use an electric wheel to "turn" the pottery, but he still uses an old two-piece technique for making large vessels, which was

standard practice for early potters. "I ask a lot of people come here which side of the jug you put the handle on; very few have ever told me. They say, 'it don't make any difference,' I tell them, 'it does' and they want to know why, I tell them, 'it ain't but two sides of a jug—inside and outside.'"

Sandra Brown has become the most active female folk potter in Alabama today. She does not turn much pottery, but works as hard as Jerry in glazing, finishing, and marketing the ware. In fact, she handles most of the sales work. She also makes the faces on many of the face jugs produced at the shop. Her son Jeff Wilburn was the first and most productive of all of Jerry Brown's apprentices and her daughter Tammy Wilburn Rawls works from time to time at the shop. Jeff is now helping Jerry train his son Brandon Wilburn. Jerry and Sandra have trained a number of younger people in their shop. Jerry's son by his first marriage, also named Jeff, has received training and has worked in the shop. He is currently working as a logger but Jerry hopes that he will become more

interested in becoming a potter in the future. Jeff Brown's daughter Jennifer has also shown interest in making pottery. She sometimes turns small objects in her grandfather's shop. The latest student at Brown's Pottery is Joey Froelich, a pottery enthusiast who lives in nearby Winfield.

Jerry Brown has found that it helps to educate his customers about both the technology and tradition of his pottery. "When I go to some of the arts and craft shows and have it setting out on the table on display, most people walk by and don't even realize it. They think its ceramics (Note: By "ceramics" Jerry is referring to slip molded hobby ware.)...they don't even realize its hand-made pottery...what you call stoneware.... It's real durable.... You can take a little cream pitcher and two men or three men my size can lay it down on its side and stand up on it and it won't break." However, for the most part, the public is informed, very interested in southern folk pottery and needs no such explanations. The market for folk pottery was once only a few counties in breadth, but now, Alabama's folk potters sell their work throughout the United States. For Jerry Brown, there is great satisfaction in having made that decision twenty years ago to continue his family's long tradition. ■

Joey Brackner is the Folklife Program Manager for the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

2003 Celebration of the Arts AWARDS PERFORMERS

The Tom Wolfe Group

Tom Wolfe is the director of Jazz Studies at the University of Alabama and one of the top jazz guitarists in the Southeast. A recipient of an Artist Fellowship from the Alabama State Council on the Arts in the year 2000, he is the first guitarist in Alabama to ever be awarded such an honor. He has performed professionally since he was in high school, and by the time he was 19, Wolfe was a sideman for Bob Hope, Chita Rivera, and Jerry Van Dyke. Wolfe has played festivals such as City Stages in Birmingham and the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. He has performed with top stars like Bob Hope, Englebert Humperdink, and the Guy Lombardo Orchestra. He is in demand throughout the region in jazz clubs and as a sideman for touring artists such as vocalists Giacomo Gates and saxophonist Jamey Aebersold. Wolfe is a core musician for the W.C. Handy Music Festival in Florence, Alabama, and teaches high school students at the Handy Jazz Camp.

Wolfe has taken his music worldwide, touring the African countries of Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Morocco as a 1998 Kennedy Center/USIA Jazz Ambassador. He has also performed throughout the

United States, in El Salvador, and in France, and he often plays at various clubs in Birmingham and Tuscaloosa. Wolfe also performs and records with his trio "In Real Time." He is an officer of the state chapter of the International Association of Jazz Educators.

Tom Wolfe has been called "One of the most prolific jazz guitarists and educators emanating out of the Southeastern region of the United States," by Gleen Astarita, Modern Jazz Editor at All About Jazz.com.

With a repertoire that covers the jazz standards to contemporary/modern jazz and original compositions, Wolfe's performances can be tailored to any audience or venue. He offers solo jazz guitar (electric and acoustic); duo (sax and guitar or bass and guitar); trio (guitar, bass and drums); quartet (guitar, bass drums and sax or trumpet); and larger ensembles, which incorporate keyboards, percussion and possibly horns. He is available for workshops, concert lectures and master classes.





George Washington Carver High School Choir

The George Washington Carver High School Choir has built a reputation for musical excellence that reaches around the United States. The recipient of many honors, the choir was invited to perform at the 1998 National School Boards Association's Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana in April. The Choir routinely receives superior ratings at district, state and national competitions and festivals. The choir has been featured at Music Fest in Orlando, Florida where they were rated superior. For the past two years, the choir has competed at the National Peanut Festival Choral Competition in Dothan, Alabama where they received superior ratings and won Best of Festival consecutively.

The choir's electrifying performances at some of the most prestigious universities and in some of the finest cities have earned it recognition as one of the country's foremost high school vocal ensembles. Some of these performances include Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas; Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland; and the National Democratic Headquarters in Washington, DC. In addition, the choir has performed concerts in Cincinnati, Ohio and Nashville, Tennessee. The choir has become noted for its accurate interpretation and performance of music by African-American Composers. Critical commentary has referred to the choir as a terrific group of singers and the pride of Carver.

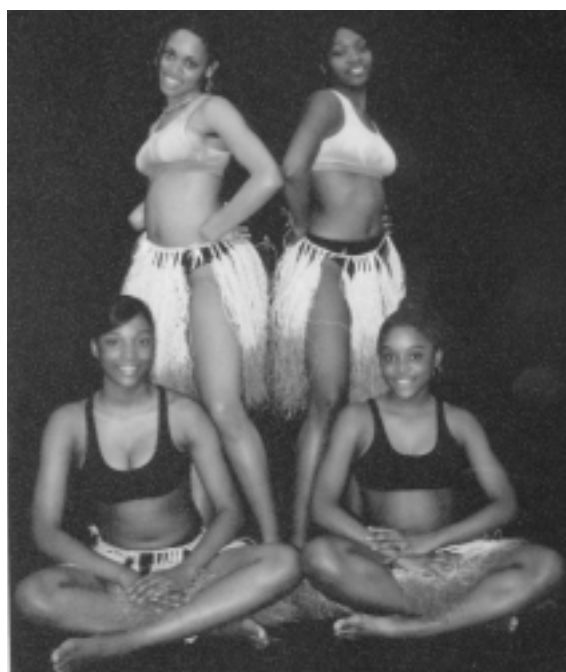
In his thirteenth year as music director, Henry Terry is continuing to use the medium of choral music to instill the importance of hard work, perseverance, dependability, and loyalty to the members of the choir. He is a native of

Elba, Alabama. He holds both the Bachelor of Arts and the Master of Music Education degrees from Alabama State University, and the Educational Specialist Degree from Auburn University at Montgomery. In 1997, the Reader's Digest Education Foundation selected him from more than seven hundred educators nationwide as a hero in education. Mr. Terry holds membership in the American Choral Directors' Association, Gospel Music

Workshop of America, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, Phi Delta Kappa, and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

Selma Youth Development Dance Company

The Selma Youth Development Dance Company is an exciting traveling dance company of four to ten young women with an ability to express a variety of dance styles, from contemporary to reflections in African heritage. Their natural skills are augmented by the Center, which promotes positive body image and overall healthy consciousness. Live drum accompaniment is often provided by Frank Hardy and Tim Sheehey.





2003 Celebration of the Alabama its EXHIBITION

The Alabama State Council on the Arts is proud to showcase the work of Alabama artists in its Montgomery gallery in the RSA Tower. The eight artists featured in this exhibition represent a variety of approaches to the disciplines of painting and photography and have achieved significant state, regional and national reputations.

Alabama Signatures/ Eight Artists: Painting & Photography

May 2-June 27, 2003

Mark Davis

Mark Davis holds a Masters Degree in Art Education from the University of South Alabama and serves as artist-in-residence at the Mobile Museum of Art. His work has been exhibited widely in juried and invitational exhibitions as well as private galleries. He received the 2001 Best of Show Award at the juried exhibition "Art With a Southern Drawl" held annually at the University of Mobile. He says, "Color is the mood and atmosphere of my paintings." The apparent minimalism of his work is in reality a complex layering of color and opaque marks, giving rise to meditative pieces of texture, rhythm and color.

Kathleen Feters

Kathleen Feters, Gordo, received the 1999 Individual Artist's Fellowship in Photography from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and exhibits regionally in arts festivals and galleries. The gallery Blue Spiral 1 in Asheville, NC has written about her work, "Skillfully interpreting the Southern gothic spirit through figurative and still life compositions, Kathleen Feters' hand painted, narrative photographs convey sublime eccentricity. Her work is a celebration of rural life through an honest and faithful lens."

Bethanne Hill

Bethanne Hill, Birmingham, is a graduate of the Alabama School of Fine Arts and received the BFA from Birmingham-Southern College. Her regional recognition includes the 2003 Best in Show Purchase Award from the Meridian Museum of Art. Her stylized, narrative paintings use abandoned rural buildings and landscapes as recurring themes. They seem to tell stories with both a sense of humor and a mysterious, dark element. She says, "I am haunted by these places, thinking of the stories that must exist."

Julie Moos

Julie Moos, Birmingham, studied at McGill University, Montreal; Sorbonne University, Paris; New York University and the International Center of Photography in New York. Her work was included in the 2002 Whitney Museum in New York Biennial, an exhibition of 113 artists considered one of the most prestigious in modern American art. Her pieces involve pairings of portraits and investigate "how issues of gender, race and class affect our communal expectations of identity." *Hat Ladies* depicts church-going African American women in Ensley, Alabama.

Amy Pleasant

Amy Pleasant, Birmingham, received the MFA from the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia. Her work was chosen for the 2002 Huntsville Museum of Art regional juried Red Clay Survey and for 2003 *New American Paintings* published by Open Studios Press. In her pieces thin, multiple layers of paint cover the human form in repetitive activity. She says, "Images become veiled and seem as if they are still shifting. I want to use the surface to create a sense of animation and layer images as our memory does. The figures begin to interact with one another and alter the way the story is read."

Wayne Sides

Wayne Sides, on the faculty of the Department of Art, University of North Alabama, Florence, holds the MFA in Photography from Pratt Institute, NY. He received the 1995 Individual Artist Fellowship in Photography from the Alabama State Council on Arts. His extensive teaching, curatorial and exhibition record includes a photographic series of the Ku Klux Klan, exhibited in 2003 at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the collaborative piece, *Litany for a Vanishing Landscape*. He says, "I've been photographing rural scenes for about 20 years now. . . . I try to be as honest to my own experience as I can."

George Taylor

George Taylor resigned an accounting career and returned to Montgomery in 1995 to pursue a lifelong dream of being an artist. He has received awards in the 2001 Montgomery Art Guild Biennial Exhibition at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts and *Exhibition South* at the Tennessee Valley Arts Center. He says, "I paint exclusively in oils because they have an unequaled feeling of solidity, depth and chromatic intensity. I paint most of my pictures *en plein air* because I have to be there, in the scene, in order to select the relationships and essences I'm after."

Pamela Venz

Pamela Venz received the MFA from The Ohio State University in 1985 and is associate professor in the Department of Art at Birmingham-Southern College. She exhibits regionally, with work selected for the Triennial Southeastern Juried Exhibition at the Mobile Museum of Art in 1999 and the 2001 Montgomery Art Guild Biennial Exhibition at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts. She notes that her visual interests have always fluctuated between photography and sculpture, exploring the unique qualities of each. More recently she has been connecting the two, "combining the perception of reality inherent in photography with the abstract reality inherent in sculpture."